

## **AGENDA ITEM #9**

May 10, 2002

To: Delta Protection Commission  
From: Lori Clamurro, Delta Protection Commission Staff  
Subject: Update on Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Management Plan  
*(For Commission Information Only)*

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### **Background**

In August 2001, the Commission held a special meeting to consider the proposed acquisition of approximately 13,000 acres of land for inclusion in the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area (please refer to attached memo on Expansions 3 and 4). At that time, Dept. of Fish and Game (DFG) committed to an open planning process for the management of those properties, and stipulated that the agricultural leases in place at the time of acquisition would remain in place until the management plan is finalized. This presentation relates to the Commission's comment letter submitted to DFG in August 2001, and how DFG has been meeting the commitments formulated as a result of those comments.

The Yolo Basin Foundation (YBF) recently secured an amendment to its CALFED contract, to have DFG and YBF hold focused meetings with various stakeholders about specific management issues on the properties acquired in 2001. DFG is pursuing a cooperative agreement with Dixon RCD for the RCD to manage the continued agricultural leases and funds for properties under DFG ownership, and may also be receiving \$40,000 to do vegetation surveys on the Tule Ranch; this would occur in Spring 2003.

### **Upcoming Acquisition**

There will be a Wildlife Conservation Board meeting on May 23, 2002, during which a proposal to acquire a 100-acre parcel ("Parker Acquisition") will be considered. The property is surrounded by State interests, has been in safflower for the past couple of years, and has been incorporated into the grazing program initiated by Los Rios Farms.

### **Expected Future Management of Properties**

As part of Expansion 4 (August 2001), a parcel that was previously under the Wetlands Reserve Program was acquired from Los Rios Farms (pink L-shaped parcel); this parcel will be restored to seasonal wetland, brood ponds, and riparian vegetation. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (U.S. Dept. of Agriculture) negotiated the Wetlands Reserve Program easement in 2000. Once restored, hunting could occur on the seasonal wetland areas.

Some of the area in the Causeway Ranch that is currently planted in a rotation of white and wild rice may be used as a hunting area, and a new parking lot is proposed. It is expected that as many as 20 blinds could be installed this year; some of these would be “family” blinds, consisting of four seats in two pits. There are 400 acres of white and wild rice on the Causeway Ranch property, which is a reduction in acreage, but a realistic assessment of what the current irrigation system can provide. Conveyance, not water availability, is the limiting factor for farming this site. With pending improvements to the Mace Ranch irrigation system, the acreage would increase for those acres detailed in its irrigation system agreement. In the past, some of the rice has been irrigated from the Mace Ranch system, even though it wasn’t part of the agreement.

On the Tule Ranch, approximately 2/3 of the 3,800-acre Los Rios grazing lease acreage has been fallow for the past couple of years; with the Los Rios grazing lease in place, productivity is expected to increase from ~1,290 acres to 3,800 acres on this property. Grazing will remain at the lower end of the Wildlife Area to provide vegetation management.

On the Los Rios property where Putah Creek meets the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, it is anticipated that a new visitor’s center may be constructed in the future by the Yolo Basin Foundation (the Pacific Flyway Center), if management planning determines it would be appropriate. This property is located just outside of the Yolo Bypass and Legal Delta.